



# Northumberland County Council

## Northumberland Supported Tenancies

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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#### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 As a service we want all young people to be happy in their placement but understand at times this may not always be the case. These guidelines do not replace Northumberland Council Council's Complaints Procedure but identify how the service will try to informally resolve issues raised in the first instance.

1.2 The procedure should be read in conjunction with the formal complaints' procedure held by Northumberland County Council.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Family/Compliments.aspx>

1.3 As a service we would like to support young people to resolve their concerns and complaints at an informal level but understand that sometimes young people may wish to use the formal complaints procedure in an effort to resolves their complaint.

1.4 As a service we acknowledge that every young person receiving a service has the right to make a complaint and as such, no young person will be penalised or singled out due to making a complaint about the service they receive. The service will use complaints received to review the service we deliver and use it as a lessons learned opportunity to improve our service delivery.

## **2.0 Internal Service Complaints Process**

2.1 In the first instance young people are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with their allocated worker and their accommodation support worker to see if we can informally resolve the issues raised. Alternatively, the young person can raise their concern directly with the registered manager for the service

2.2 In order to fully understand the concerns and ensure the complaint is being progressed appropriately, the following should be considered:

- Has it been established if the young person is wishing to make a complaint or are they raising a concern rather than a formal complaint?
- If it is a complaint, has an entry been made in the Complaints Log?
- Who is going to deal with the complaint?
- Who is making the complaint?
- What is the nature of the complaint?
- Is the complaint about a specific member of staff
- When and where has the situation arose?
- How does the complainant wish this to be resolved?
- Is there Child Protection issues/legal issues involved?
- Is the complainant agreeable for others to be made aware or is the complainant aware of who will be informed?
- Has the young person's social worker been informed?
- Has the Client Relations Team been informed?
- Who else needs to know i.e Family or carers?
- Can all matters be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned? If not, what are the outstanding issues?
- Are there lessons to be learnt? E.g. changes to individual plans, support routines, staff working practices. Have these been communicated effectively?

2.3 Where a complaint has been received, this should be logged in the complaint log for NAS supported tenancies and actions undertaken to resolve the issue and the outcome of any complaint. Complaint Log.docx

2.4 Where a complaint involves a member of staff within the service, that member of staff should not be involved in the investigation of the complaint in order to ensure the integrity of the complaint process. The staff member involved should not approach the young person, this is to safeguard both the young person and the member of staff

2.5 Where a complaint has been made, it will ordinarily be investigated by the Registered Manager or the Service Lead in the absence of the registered manager. If the complaint related to either the registered manager or the service lead, then the nominated individual for the service will be responsible for overseeing the complaints process.

2.6 Young People may need support to make a complaint, and this can be done through a trusted adult that the young person feels is most appropriate to support them and may include the use of an independent advocate.

2.7 The young person always has right of access to other professionals i.e. Client Relations, Advocate, Social Worker or different member of staff to investigate the complaint.

2.8 Discussion must take place between the young person and others involved in the complaint regarding confidentiality boundaries. The member of staff allocated to deal with the complaint should gather evidence, which may include interviewing witnesses. All discussions relating to the complaint must be recorded.

2.9 If a young person attempts to discuss the complaint with a member of staff, the young person should be informed that they cannot discuss the complaint with them

2.10 Once all information has been gathered through the investigation, the Registered Manager should decide on a course of action. This could include referral to other professionals i.e. Senior Manager for Residential Homes, Client Relations, LADO, Advocate, Social Worker.

2.11 If the complaint is resolved and no further action is required, this should be recorded and discussed with the young person

2.12 Records should be held on the young person's ICS Case file, and uploaded to documents

2.13 A Copy to be sent to the Client Relations Team and Social Worker for information only.

### **3.0 External Complaints Process**

3.1 Where a young person does not feel that their complaint has been resolved or where they do not want to consider the internal complaints process, they are able to make a formal complaint via the Council Formal Complaints process

3.2 All documentation and correspondence must be held in the young person's ICS case file, a copy held in the NAS Supported Tenancies complaints file, a copy sent to the client's relations department (CRO).

3.3 Only information on current young people in placement should be held in the scheme's complaints file.

3.4 Where the young person has made a complaint by letter or telephone to the Client Relations Department, the Participation Officers or any officer of the council, the staff must not try to solicit information from the young person or the department as both services are confidential.

3.5 The CRO, Participation Officers or any other officer of the council will inform the service if they wish to visit the young person to discuss the complaint, at which point they may inform the manager of the nature of the complaint.

3.6 The CRO department, Participation Officers and any other relevant officer from the council will on all occasions send copies of correspondence to the service to file.

3.7 A further letter to the young person will be generated from a senior member of staff, manager or Service Manager for Cared For Children acknowledging the complaint, a copy will be held on the young person's ICS case file and the service complaints file during their period of accommodation, with a copy sent to the placing Social Worker and Team Manager.

### **4.0 Client Relations Team Protocol for dealing with complaints made by young people**

4.1 A complaint may be made to the Client Relations section in writing or by

telephone using the free phone number.

4.2 A Client Relations Officer (CRO) will telephone make direct contact with the young person. At this stage no information will be provided about the nature of the complaint as it is important to maintain the young person's right to confidentiality.

4.3 The CRO will speak to the young person to ask if they would like the CRO to visit them to discuss the issue(s) further. If they wish to see the CRO an appointment time will be suggested and the young person will be advised that they can have an advocate provided by NYAS to support them in making the complaint.

4.4 Having discussed the complaint with the young person, and with the young person's consent, the CRO will inform the Registered Manager and will also contact the young person's Social Worker to alert them to the fact that a complaint has been received.

4.5 If the young person would like to have an advocate present at their meeting with the CRO, the CRO will contact the Participation Service and request the provision of an advocate. They will then liaise with the advocate regarding their availability to meet with the young person.

4.6 In most cases where the young person does not choose to have an advocate present and, if possible, the CRO will visit the following day. If there is sufficient time between the call to make the appointment and the actual date of the appointment the CRO will write to the young person to confirm the appointment. If there is insufficient time to send a letter the CRO will ask staff to inform the young person of the details of the arrangement.

4.7 During the meeting with the young person to discuss their complaint(s), permission will be sought to share the detail with the relevant staff in order to resolve the issue(s). If the young person refuses they will be informed that the likelihood is that it is unlikely to be possible to resolve the issue.

4.8 If, during the initial telephone call to the young person, they decline the offer of meeting with the CRO (and advocate), there may be sufficient information to enable the CRO to raise the issue(s) with the registered

manager on the young person's behalf. In such a case the CRO will check with the young person that they would like this to happen and, if so, the CRO will contact the relevant staff.

4.9 If there is insufficient information and the young person declines to provide more they will be advised that it will not be possible to pursue the complaint. If the young person indicates that they no longer wish to pursue the complaint this will be acknowledged. In either case the CRO will write to the young person confirming their understanding of the situation and inviting the young person to contact them again at any time should they wish to pursue this or any other concern in the future.

4.10 Assuming the young person is happy for their complaint(s) to be discussed with staff, the CRO will contact the registered manager to discuss the issue(s) and identify a way to address them.

4.11 At this point a further E Mail will be sent to the Service Manager for Cared For Children and the Registered Manager providing details of the young person's name, the nature of their complaint and the proposed response.

4.12 Once the Service Manager for Cared For Children and Registered Manager confirm receipt of the E Mail and the proposed response a letter will be written by the CRO to the young person as soon as is practicable. This will outline the nature of the complaint and the proposed response to it. The response will be copied to the Registered Manager and the young person's Social Worker to enable them to follow this up with the young person if necessary.

4.13 At this point the Service Manager for Cared For children will write to the young person to acknowledge that a complaint has been made and offer to visit them to discuss the complaint if they wish. This and any subsequent letters following the visit will be copied to the CRO for information.

4.14 10 days after the visit by the CRO a questionnaire will be sent to the young person. This will allow the young person the opportunity to indicate whether or not the issue has been resolved to their satisfaction, though it is accepted that some young people choose not to respond.

4.15 If a questionnaire is returned which indicates that the issue has not been resolved the CRO will contact the young person to discuss how they wish to take the issue forward and will discuss with them the possibilities – for example further discussion with Managers or a formal investigation of the complaint(s).

## **5.0 Procedures in Relation to Complaints From Family Members**

5.1 Whilst the focus of the complaint's procedure is on the right of a young people to make a complaint, it is acknowledged that a family member may wish to raise a concern or complaint in respect of the service that is being received by their child.

5.2 The above processes would apply to a family member making a complaint and will involve services speaking directly with the family member as well as the young person in placement.

## **6.0 Unresolved Complaints**

6.1 Where a young person or their family do not feel that their complaint has been resolved via the formal complaints process, they are able to make a representation to the Local Government Ombudsman to ask for a review of their complaint - <https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

6.2 In addition to contacting the Local Government Ombudsman, young people and their families are able to lodge a formal complaint with the following bodies:

- The Children Commissioner for England via their Enquiry Page:  
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/contact/>

- Department for Education – Ofsted:  
Ofsted National Business Unit,  
3rd Floor Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA  
Tel: 0300 1231232  
Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure#complain-about-a-provider-ofsted-inspects-or-regulates>

## **7.0 Contact Details for the Service**

**7.1** To contact the service please see below:

Registered Manager – Ginny Younger

Accommodation Service

Northumberland Adolescent Service

Northumbria House

Manor Walks Shopping & Leisure

Manor Walk

Cramlington

NE23 6UR

Tel: 01670 536400

Email: [accommodationteam@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:accommodationteam@northumberland.gov.uk)